



ADA Facts

MARIJUANA

Marijuana, or *cannabis sativa*, is the most widely used *illicit* drug in the United States. Marijuana is a mind-altering drug which distorts perception and diminishes motor skills. Hashish and sensimilla are other forms of cannabis. Known as a “gateway drug,” marijuana frequently opens the door to use of other drugs.

According to a 2000 survey of Missouri public-school students (grades 6,8,10, and 12), 21 percent reported any use, and 12.5 percent reported use in the 30 days preceding the survey.

Commonly known as grass, pot, or weed, marijuana is a tall, leafy, dark-green plant (*cannabis sativa*) that is cultivated for street sales.

▼ How It Is Used

Marijuana gets its hallucinogenic properties from the chemical THC, short for delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol. It is just one of more than 400 chemicals found in the marijuana plant — many for which the effects on the human body are not yet known. THC is found throughout the marijuana plant but is concentrated in oils found in the leaves and in the seeds. Through hybridization, marijuana grown today is many times more potent than that grown even 10 years ago. It is grown extensively out-of-doors in warm climates, both in the United States and in other countries, and indoors under lights in cooler locations. International smuggling is a major concern of U.S. law enforcement officials.

Smoking is the most common method of using marijuana. The leaves and other parts of the plant are dried and then crumbled into smaller pieces that are then rolled into a cigarette called a “joint” or burned in pipes or water pipes called “bongs.” Occasionally, small cigars are hallowed out and filled with marijuana or a joint is dipped in a volatile fluid before smoking. Marijuana also is sometimes added to food and ingested.

▼ Its Effects

People under the influence of marijuana are said to be “high.”

Short-term Effects or Symptoms Include:

- sleepiness and increased hunger (sometimes called “the munchies”)
- difficulty keeping track of time
- impaired or reduced short-term memory
- inability to perform tasks requiring concentration, including driving a vehicle
- increased heart rate that may pose a danger to those with heart disease
- bloodshot eyes, dry mouth and throat

- a lowering of inhibitions leading to unsafe behavior, such as unprotected sex
- panic attacks, paranoia, and hallucinations.

▼ Long-term Marijuana Use Can Lead to:

- increased risk for certain cancers, including lung cancer, because of the high concentrations of cancer causing chemicals in marijuana tar;
- lower testosterone levels in males that may inhibit or prevent the development of male sexual characteristics in adolescent boys;
- higher testosterone levels in females which can lead to increased facial and body hair and acne;
- lower sperm counts in men and increased risk of infertility in women;
- psychological dependence;
- a condition called “burnout,” where the user appears to be dull, slow, and inattentive;
- physiological aspects, including retention in the system for weeks after use.

Marijuana is the most frequently used and abused illicit substance. Despite its widespread use, there are currently no known proven medical uses. Research continues, though, on the efficacy of medical use with certain chemotherapy patients and others.

▼ Information

For additional information about marijuana, please visit the websites of the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (www.samhsa.gov/centers/csap/csap.html), and the National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.drugabuse.gov).



For more information,
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Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse